2005 Report of Accomplishments (July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005)
Columbia Conservation District

Most Significant Natural Resource Accomplishment

- *Irrigation Efficiencies Program returns 2.59 cfs and 227.13 acre feet of water to the Tucannon River, home to 4 ESA listed species, Spring Chinook Salmon, Fall Chinook Salmon, Summer Steelhead, and Bull Trout. Program will benefit various life stages while helping producers increase production due to state-of-the-art irrigation systems designed to minimize water usage while meeting crop production demand. Program provides additional water for salmonid recovery while dealing with concerns of eminent threat and meeting NPCC Tucannon Subbasin Plan and the Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan biological objectives.*

Mission of the Columbia Conservation District

- *"Mission of Columbia Conservation District is to provide the needed support to people who own, manage, or utilize the natural resources so their activities will enhance the region's natural resources while ensuring the quality of life & culture these resources provide."*

Natural Resource Improvements in 2005 - Summary

- *Implementation grant funding installed 5 livestock projects to protect surface water quality installed. Projects included fencing, water gaps, wells, storage tanks and troughs installed by landowners.*
- *CREP saw 11.4 new acres contracted, 9 previous projects complete installation, and started implementation of 1 additional previously signed contract.*
- *Installed 5 fish screens and 7 flow meters.*
- *Led or participated in five watershed recovery processes and two state task forces.*
- *Successfully navigated Cultural Resource processes on various project through both state and federal levels.*
- *Utilized engineering support on nine joint agency projects.*
- *Provided support to remove 5 fish passage barriers.*
- *Provided funding support for 692 county youth though natural science education programs.*
- *Provided educational programs for 120 county producers.*
- *Operated Columbia County Burn Permit Program where we issued Agriculture Field Burn permits to county producers to utilize fire as a management tool thus reducing tillage sediment impacts to surface water through reduced tillage.*

Water Quality Implementation

- *Installed 1 livestock project in a District identified Lower Whetstone priority area, which lies within the Touchet River Watershed not funded by USDA EQIP. Project encompassed 67 acres of range grazing land and 1,300' or 0.25 miles of stream/drainage length. Project included installing 2 new troughs, resetting 1 existing trough, and 2,184 feet of pipeline. Project is designed to remove open overflows from confinement areas and improve grazing quality due to enhanced rotation capabilities.*
- *Installed 2 riparian fencing projects with livestock water gaps along the Touchet River. These projects lie side by side thus increasing their potential impacts. Projects encompassed 63 acres of stream side pasture and 2,980' or 0.56 miles of stream. Projects included installing 4 livestock water gaps and 5,680 feet of riparian fencing. Projects are designed to minimize livestock impact to Summer Steelhead utilizing reaches, protect current buffer vegetation and eliminate stream bank erosion.*
- *Project benefits include soil retention along drainages and streams, reduction of sediment transport to and within ESA species listed streams, reduction of nutrient levels, and potential reduction of long-term water temperature.*

Basic Funding

- *Used to support environmental youth education, production agriculture field and education days.*
- *Provide funding for basic district operations and office support for program implementation.*

Local Funding

- *Currently Columbia Conservation District's only local funding source is from issuing agricultural field burn permits. This program supports the utilization of burning as a management tool for cereal crop producers. Burning provides for continuous crop rotations without inversion tillage thereby retaining sediments at their source and minimizing sediment transport to surface waters resulting in improved water quality. This service is provided at the request of producers and in support of a proven soil retention farming practice.*
- *Created a fair booth display on state burning law. Fair attendance was estimated at 2750.*

Professional Engineering

- *Survey assistance to the Dayton East End and West End Irrigation Ditches. Ditches are utilizing Walla Walla Watershed Alliance funding to continue to pipe open ditches and eliminate conveyance loss.*
- *Scoped, assessed, surveyed and designed 5 livestock influenced water quality and 5 fish passage projects in conjunction with the DNR/WDFW Family Forest Fish Passage Program. Began work on a 5th off-site livestock watering and the Highway 261 culver projects. Projects involved riparian fencing, water gaps, off-site watering facilities, and replacement and/or modification of road culverts. Scoped a potential road relocation project for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation on the South Touchet River Rainwater Wildlife Area. Suggested a proposal be submitted for SRFB 6th round grant funding for a full assessment study prior to any road work.*

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- *Signed 2 new contracts (CRP1) on 11.4 acres and 0.70 miles of ESA species listed streams.*
- *Practice installation on previously signed contracts included 26,094 feet of buffer fence, 9,255 feet of auxiliary fence (BPA funding via Tucannon River Model Watershed Program), and 3 livestock water systems consisting of 1 spring development, 1 storage tank, 11 troughs, and 7,113 feet of pipeline..*
- *Tree and shrub planting was stopped due to a drought initiated moratorium by FSA, the financial arm of USDA.*
- *Completed GPS mapping of all Tucannon Contracts. Mapping includes corner and center point designations.*
- *Work continues on interest/intent sign-ups (CRP2).*
- *Benefits are a reduction in stream bank erosion, fecal coliform levels, and nutrient pollutants while increasing riparian filtration function, canopy cover (potential reduction in long term water temperature), large woody material recruitment, and floodplain connectivity,*

Livestock/Dairy

- *Installed 2 projects utilizing WCC Implementation Funds for phase 1 and other funding for phase 2.*
- *Project, in conjunction with USDA EQIP, was designed to minimize barn and barn yard run-off, eliminate livestock utilization of stream, provide better pasture utilization, and increase buffer function. Project included a well, pumping plant, 730' pipeline, and 1 trough. EQIP portion includes, barn gutters, pipeline, and 2 troughs. Project is located within key ESA listed Spring Chinook and Steelhead spawning and rearing reach on the Tucannon River. Project impacts: a) 33 pasture acres; b) extensive barnyard corral and calving areas; and c) 2,300' or 0.44 miles of ESA listed stream bank.*
- *Project, in conjunction with WDOE, was designed to eliminate direct livestock access to stream channel and open overflows from confinement areas while improving grazing distribution along a tributary to the Tucannon River impacting ESA listed Summer Steelhead spawning and rearing reaches, Spring Chinook migration reaches, and potential pollutant delivery to Fall Chinook Spawning reaches. Project consisted of a well. WDOE portion includes, pipeline, 2 troughs, and storage tank. Project impacts 200 acres of range grazing and 634' or 0.12 miles of tributary drainage. Project was not funded by USDA EQIP.*
- *Benefits include soil retention along drainages and streams, reduction of sediment transport to and within ESA species listed streams, reduction of nutrient levels, and potential reduction of long-term water temperature through riparian buffer protection.*

Irrigation Efficiencies

- *Completed installation of two projects returning a total of 2.59 cfs and 227.13 acre feet to the Tucannon River for an instream use via the Washington Water Trust. Both projects received supplemental Bonneville Power Administration funding via the Tucannon River Model Watershed Program led by the District.*
- *Project 1 allows for abandonment of 3 diversion ditches and moves diversion directly to the river. All diversions are screened and metered. Project installed 4 new circle irrigation systems and updated a 5th existing circle to save 1.488 cfs and 130.88 acre feet impacting 4.25 miles of river in critical ESA listed Spring Chinook and Summer Steelhead spawning and rearing reaches. Project covers 211.3 acres of production ground. Project will be completed in August 2005.*
- *Project 2 eliminates use of 1 surface water diversion and moves use to a metered well. Project installed 12 new circle irrigation systems and updated 2 existing circles to save 1.11 cfs and 93.25 acre feet impacting 5.5 miles of river in critical ESA listed Fall Chinook spawning & rearing, Spring Chinook, Summer Steelhead migration, and Bull Trout over-wintering reaches. Project covers 200 acres of production cropland.*
- *Contracted with Walla Walla Community College Water Management Program to re-evaluate potential water savings for producers and to write Irrigation Water Management Plans. College completed 8 re-assessments of producer irrigation systems and wrote 4 water management plans*
- *Project benefit is return of "trust" water to an instream use to benefit ESA listed species and increased production due to state-of-the-art irrigation systems and plans designed to minimize water usage but meet crop production demand.*

Watershed Conservation/Habitat Restoration

- *Cost shared 5 NOAA Fisheries, USF&WS, and WDFW compliant water withdrawal screens affectively reducing potential for "take". Accomplished with a combination of funding from SRFB and water user.*
- *Cost shared 7 WDOE flow meters on water withdrawals. Water users report directly to WDOE. Accomplished with a combination of funding from WDOE and water user.*
- *Completed the Tucannon River Model Watershed Milestone Assessment to measure how far restoration has come and what is yet to be accomplished.*

Community Collaboration & Coordination

- *Led successful efforts to have the May 2004 version of the Tucannon Subbasin Plan adopted into the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Plan.*
- *Contributed to the successful effort to have the revised version of the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan adopted into the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Plan.*
- *Facilitated and/or participated with active local citizenry involvement in HB 2496 Lead Entity for WRIA's 32 & 35; Snake River Regional Salmon Board; HB2514 Watershed Planning for WRIA's 32 & 35; WACD/WCC & DOE Livestock Influenced Water Quality Task Force; and WACD/WCC CREP Task Force.*
- *Worked Cooperatively with NRCS, Walla Walla Watershed Alliance, WCC, and project sponsors to complete Cultural Resource Surveys on various projects.*

Marketing/Outreach & Education

- *Conducted an annual Winter Education Day attended by 78 producers on current issues in conservation and economics of production agriculture.*
- *Conducted a spring BMP tour involving 42 producers to view current production trends.*
- *Provide Soil Stewardship curriculum to 327 K through 5th grade age students.*
- *Provide material support for 57 6th graders that attended Wooten Environmental Camp.*
- *Provided material support for the Salmon in the Classroom, reaching 263 elementary students on salmonid lifecycle and management.*
- *Conduct a fall Supervisor Tour to keep supervisors updated on production issues and potential local concerns.*

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices